

Tom leatherwood Register of Deeds Questionnaire

Section 1

- Q. How does your education and experience in personnel and technology systems management qualify you for this position?**
- A. I have ten years of valuable knowledge and successful experience working with the personnel and implementing advanced technology in the register's office. Because of this knowledge and experience, I have been called on by the local Bar Association to conduct continuing education seminars for local attorneys. Because of this knowledge and experience, I can walk into a customer's office now and show them how to set up their system to interface with ours so they can successfully "e-file" a document saving them and the register's office time and money.**

Section 2

- Q. How efficient and technologically up-to-date is our present document recording and records retrieval system in the register's office?**
- A. The register's office is now one of the most efficient offices in Shelby County government. Employees are "cross-trained" for multiple functions and thus no "bottleneck" of workflow exists. When I became Register, all records were on microfiche and microfilm. The current recording and record retrieval system is the most advanced in the State of Tennessee. During my tenure, searchable databases for these records have been created and records have been digitized dating back to the 1800's. These changes enable the return of original documents to the customer generally within 24 hours of recording. In addition, we implemented electronic recording of documents, "e-file", which saves time and money for the customers and the register's office. These improvements have allowed the office to be self-funded, running exclusively on fees and using zero county tax dollars for its operation.**
- Q. What is your position on the publication online of citizen's social security numbers in documents recorded in register's office? What would you propose to better assure online security of such information?**
- A. Citizen's social security numbers should not be placed on documents recorded in the register's office and placed online.**

Tennessee law states:

"10-7-515. Social security identification numbers on documents — Redaction. — (a) The preparer of any document recorded in the office of the county register of deeds shall not place a social security identification number on any document filed or recorded in the office of the county register of deeds, other than a power of attorney. However, the county register shall not refuse to record a document for failure of the preparer to comply with the prohibition contained in this section regarding use of social security identification numbers; nor shall the failure to comply with such prohibition affect the validity or recordability of any document."

Therefore, the first step is for attorneys and other preparers of documents to follow the law and not put social security numbers on documents to be filed in the register's office. A few preparers, such as one of my opponents, put citizens at risk by allowing their social security numbers on documents. Since state law does not allow registers to reject these documents, I needed other authority to protect people. As a result, I was instrumental in writing legislation that permits the

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register to remove social security numbers from recorded documents. Not all counties in Tennessee opted into our legislation.

The second step is for the Register to continue using the latest technology, such as OCR programs, and well-trained and accountable employees to find any social security numbers that may be placed on documents and redact them before they are placed on-line.

As a third step, I would be a proponent of new legislation that permits the register to reject any document presented for recording containing a social security identification number.

Section 3

Q. Based on your awareness of voter concerns, what should be the register's priorities during the next four years?

A. I believe voters primary concern is their economy, therefore, if re-elected, one priority will be to maintain an efficient and effective office that runs exclusively on fees, using zero county tax dollars. I have worked diligently to make sure this office does not become an unnecessary drain on limited county resources.

I believe voters are also concerned with service; therefore, another priority will be to continue expanding the number and types of records available on-line and to continue providing secure and easy access to public records.

Q. Do you have an opinion on whether appointments versus election of this office, is a better method?

A. I think the Register's office should remain an elected office that is answerable directly to the people. The citizens of Shelby County have the right to vote for the candidate of their choice in this office.